Mary in the Rosary

by Father Jacques-Marie Louis Monsabre, O.P.

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The Joyful Mysteries

I. The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin - Greatness and Humility of Mary

We have followed our Blessed Saviour by contemplation through the mysteries of the Rosary. Our first duty was to Him. Under the invocation of His grace and permission we will now consider His holy Mother in these same mysteries. In doing so we will not lose sight of Him; for where Jesus is, there is Mary.

"An angel is sent from God to Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house and family of David; and the name of the virgin was Mary." (Luke 1)

Let us consider with what respectful homage the messenger of God performs his mission. He does not deliver a command, as the angels had hitherto done when addressing patriarchs, prophets, or kings; but he expresses by a respectful salutation his profound reverence: Ave Maria - Hail Mary!

And what is found so venerable in this young maiden, this child of humanity, that an angel is obliged to bow before Her? Two things: The grace of God with which She is tilled and the greatness to which She is destined. She differed in this from all other mortals, that She was not stained by the guilt of the primal fall. The sacred germ of sanctity engrafted upon Her from the first moment of Her conception had developed without hindrance or delay, and had produced virtues singularly admirable. She is indeed "full of grace, and the Lord is with Her." He will verily be with Her when the adorable mystery shall have been accomplished which

Gabriel came to announce to Her in the very words of the prophet Isaias as quoted by Saint Luke: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a son, . . . and He shall be called the Son of the Most High."

What is the attitude of Mary in presence of this wonderful announcement? When God loaded Her with so many favors it would seem that Her first impulse would be a transport of joy and of gratitude. Not at all. Her joy is hidden; Her gratitude will come in its own time, more profound and more lively because it will have been prepared by a sincere and profound humility. Before the song of gladness passes through Her heart, and the expression of gratitude flows from Her lips, Mary instinctively imitates the annihilation of Him who comes to Her. She is troubled; She believes Herself unworthy of this honor conferred upon Her and of the glory that is announced. She reflects that it is only the One who is the source of all grace that can be truly full of grace. Having become certain that She was to be the Mother of God, She proclaims Herself His handmaid, and wishes ever to remain so.

How well calculated this wonderful humility of our Mother is to confound us! Wretched children of sin that we are and sinners ourselves, very poor in grace and virtue, we are ever ready to be puffed up with pride. There is no need of angels coming down from heaven to do us homage or to felicitate us, to make us think highly of ourselves. It is quite sufficient that men should address us in words of praise. And what men! Not always those who are superior to ourselves in position or character, not always those whose discrimination and ability justify us in giving credit to their words; but often the most inconsiderate and even vilest of men, men who content themselves with seeing merely the outside of our characters and who flatter us only to detect our follies and strip us of our good qualities. In the absence of flattery how

prodigal we are of Aves directed to ourselves! Blind to our imperfections and faults, and considering only the advantages, more or less notable, we have derived from nature and education, we take occasion from them to prefer ourselves to others. The very gifts of God himself serve but to turn our heads; spiritual favors too often become food for our incurable vanity; and instead of seeing in them the pure liberality of the Giver of all good gifts and of making them redound to His glory, we attribute them to our own merits and turn them to our own advantage.

O Mary! Thou Virgin ever most humble, have pity on these poor children. Inspire them with a contempt of praise and flattery, a horror of vain complaisance; and should they be gifted with the best that nature and grace can give, make them look upon themselves as the least of the servants of God.

II. The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin - The Charity and Gratitude of Mary

Let us admire the loving anxiety of Mary to be with Her cousin Saint Elizabeth. She rises and goes with haste across the mountain country. She fears no difficulties of the road; She despises the fatigue of travelling, for She carries with Her the grace of God, and that grace is so great a gift we should be prepared to make any sacrifices in bearing it to those for whom it is destined.

And She goes, without knowing it, to receive a new honor. As soon as Elizabeth had heard the voice of Her salutation and felt the unborn child leap for joy in her womb, she took up and continued the words of the angel, saying: "Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb. And whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should deign to visit me?"

In response to these wonderful and inspired words there is another outburst of humility on the part of Mary; it is the grand canticle of thanksgiving which the Church repeats every day in her offices: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." The Mother of God hides Herself before Him and takes the humble position of a servant. She speaks only of the glory of Her Lord, of His goodness, His munificence, His power, His mercy, His fidelity to His promises. She praises, blesses, and thanks Him; Her heart is full of the most perfect acts of thanksgiving.

Attention, Christians! This mystery contains for us two lessons. It teaches, first of all, that our relations with our neighbor should be regulated by a charity altogether supernatural - a charity having for its object the greatest of

all benefits, which is the effusion of the grace of God in their souls. And, if we rightly understand our charity in their regard, those souls in which sin has made its dwelling-place will be most dear to us. We will freely sacrifice our pleasure, our repose, if needs be our health and life, to deliver them from the frightful evil that makes them enemies of God.

In the second place, this mystery teaches us that we ought to thank God for His benefits. All that is in us is God's benefit - our body, our soul, our life, every moment of our existence. To the benefits of nature those of grace are added - faith, the divine promises, the numerous donations God makes of Himself, interior lights, holy inspirations, mysterious impulses which inspire us with generous resolves. For how many and how great favors are we indebted to the divine bounty!

It is necessary to give thanks to the Author of all these blessings; it is the law. We bear that law within us; it is stamped upon our instincts and our conscience. To receive a benefit, to make it one's own, to profit by it, and to forget the benefactor, is more loathsome to us than a thousand other meannesses, villanies, crimes, or misdeeds. The horror in which we hold the monster who has deserved to be called an ingrate can only be explained by a law of nature which requires every benefit to be returned to the benefactor in the form of grateful thanks. God's will is clear in this regard: "Give thanks to God in all things," says the apostle; "for this is the will of God in Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Again, it is our interest thus to thank our benefactor; for if it is the law that the benefit should return to its author, it is also a law that the benefactor show himself so much the more generous according as he is more frequently and more sincerely thanked. Gratitude is the fruitful seed of benefits; ingratitude causes them to wither and die. It is, says Saint

Bernard, a scorching wind that dries up the dews of mercy and shuts off the torrents of grace.

Are we faithful in giving thanks? Alas! we are not. Energetic in asking, we open wide all the doors of our indigence to receive the gifts of God. "When we have received a benefit we seem to think that it is no more than a just price for the pains we have taken to obtain it; and if our satisfied hearts are not entirely silent, they send forth to God, as a general rule, only a weak and cold expression of thanks. We are ungrateful. And this it is that brings about those spiritual aridities and days of desolation which we so bitterly complain of to the directors of our souls.

Do you desire, O Christian soul! that God would always add benefit to benefit in your regard? Then strive to imitate the gratitude of Mary, and let Her beautiful canticles, in some form, be on your lips: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, because He has deigned to have pity on the lowliness of his poor servant. I was not, and He gave me being; I was in darkness, and He gave me the light of faith; I was a slave of sin, and He broke my chains and crushed my proud enemies; I was in exile, and He made Himself my companion; I was feeble, and He sustained me by His powerful arm: I was hungry, and He nourished me by the Bread of heaven. Indeed the Lord has done great things for me."

Let us thank Him for evermore.

III. Birth of Our Saviour - Mary at the Crib

Jesus is born in Bethlehem; He is born in a stable. In that most despised situation He received the homage of angels and of men - of angels, a joyful multitude of whom praise the Lord and make the air resound with the sublime canticle: "Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will"; of men also, of all conditions, who came to prostrate themselves before the crib and are in a manner repelled by the mystery of the abasement, the poverty, the suffering under which the majesty of the divine Word enfolds itself.

Here are the shepherds, men of simple, sweet, and faithful hearts; there are the Magi, kings of knowledge and shepherds of men, having come from a far-distant country under the direction of a mysterious star; and here is the humble Joseph, absorbed in the perfections of his adopted Child. They wonder, they adore and reciprocate their impressions of heavenly joy. For them Bethlehem is a paradise on earth.

More fervent than angels or men we behold an adorer at the crib of the Infant God; it is His Mother. Every hour, every instant is spent by Her in adoring and loving the fruit of Her chaste womb. Her love is intense, compassionate, attentive, devoted.

It is intense: She forgets the whole world; in it there is nothing for Her but Her Jesus. Her heart unites itself with His Heart, in order that She may never love any creature except in and through the adorable Heart of Her Saviour.

Her love is compassionate. The first sufferings of the Man-God rebound most sadly upon Her maternal heart, all the more sensitive than the hearts of other mothers because She is a virgin. It is most grievous to Her to be able to offer for His comfort only poor swaddling-clothes. She tenderly wipes away the tears of the divine Infant; She is ready to suffer all evils for His sake.

Her love is attentive: She seeks to find in the eyes of her Child, in His smiles, in His cries, in the movement of His lips, the expression of His most holy Will- But more than all else She studies within Herself the mysterious workings of grace, and holds Herself in readiness to obey every impulse of divine love.

Her love is devoted: She gives all to Him. Her soul, Her body, Her life, all belong to Him. Well may She repeat the word of the canticle: "My Beloved is all to me, and I am all to Him."

O Virgin! O Mother most admirable! How cold and languid is our love when compared to Thine! Instead of concentrating itself on its true object, it spreads itself on creatures and on earthly goods; it runs from one object to another, making trial of all, content with nothing, and never knowing that it can only be satisfied with the Sovereign Good.

Instead of compassion for our Lord, our love only seeks satisfaction and joy for itself. Like the carnal Jews, it is scandalized at the adorable helplessness and the touching wretchedness of the Infant God. The crib, the swaddling-clothes, the dispossessed Sovereign, without greatness or prestige, is something they had not dreamt of. They preferred an opulent monarch who would invite them to take part in his good-fortune and give them a continual feast. Are we not sometimes as blind?

Instead of strict attention to the holy will of God, our love often gives ear to the voice of its own inconstant desires; and even in the spiritual life, to which it makes pretensions, it finds ways and means to make its own fancies and caprices prevail against good counsels and wise admonitions.

Instead of being all devoted to God, our love tends too often to keep back or give sparingly that which was once offered to Him without reserve; and for its small generosity it bitterly complains of never receiving enough in return.

Oh, how poor is our love! How poor the vase, the heart, that contains it! Yet I desire to love my Jesus. I desire it in the depths of my heart. Take my love, O Holy Mother, and make it like Thine!

IV. The Purification of the Blessed Virgin - Mary and the Law of God

What is the meaning of the mystery of the Purification? Is it that Mary should be subject to the legal observances that bind sinners?

The fall of our first parents unchained passions at first held captive. These passions sullied and stained the conception and birth of every human creature, and, to complete the misfortune, every child born of woman was stricken with the divine malediction. Every mother bore in her womb a child of death, and with pain brought a sinner into the world. Here is the reason why God required Her purification. But Mary is purity itself. The awful law of sin was suspended in Her favor, and, whilst every conception and every birth around Her were corrupted by sin, Her conception and birth were sanctified by grace. God, in whose sight the angels are not pure, calls Her "all fair and without stain" (Canticle 4:7). The Mother of the Word incarnate conceived in purity and brought forth without pain. Overshadowed by the power of the Most High, Her virginity suffered no detriment when She conceived of the Holy Ghost. Before, and during, and after Her child-bearing She is a virgin. Why, therefore, Her purification?

It is the law. Mary desired to give an example of respect and submission along with Her divine Son. Tenderly She bears Jesus in Her arms; She presses His heart to Hers, Her ears to His lips, and He seems to say to Her already what He will so often repeat in His public life: "One iota or one tittle shall not pass from the law till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18)

She submits Herself, therefore, to an observance to which She is not obliged, for the edification of the Jews, who would not have understood Her abstention, but more especially for the edification of Christians, whom She thus engages in a perfect reverence for the law of God. "It is the law! " Behold, Christian soul, what you ought to say every time you find yourselves in presence of a commandment of God or of the Church, or of your lawful superiors. Away with vain protests conjured up by the imagination to obtain dispensations! Away with false reasonings, the inspirations of self-love and sensuality! You put forward the delicate state of your health; are you sure that it will be made more feeble by your observance? Business is pressing; but is it really true that it will suffer by the rest God requires of you, by the Mass you ought to hear, by the prayer you ought to offer? You urge the duties of society, in which no failure is allowed; but should you not be agreeable and pleasing to God before being so to men? Your dignity is offended by the tyrannical commands of your own equals; but what is this dignity of a sinner in relation to the will of him who, while it lasts, represents the will of God? And will it not contribute to your perfection if you take a humiliation in good part?

You speak of natural repugnances; let them be conquered. The word of our Lord is plain: "Narrow is the way that leadeth to life" (Matthew 7); and again: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matthew 11)

Away with all distinctions between grave and light observances! Everything is grave when there is question of eternal salvation and of perfection which is its price. God blesses the servants who are "faithful over a few things, and invites them to participate in the joy of the Lord."

Away with those negligences which you so readily permit under the pretext that they bind your conscience but lightly! One light fault brings on another. The soul that is entangled in light faults easily stumbles and often falls most disgracefully. "Who loveth the danger shall perish in it." (Ecclus. 3)

Onward, Christians! It is the law. Show yourselves generous, like your holy Mother, in the love of God, the salvation of your soul, the perfection of your life; in the edification of those who look to you for an example, and whom you may so easily draw to the faithful service of God. Not a step outside the law till all be fulfilled!

V. The Finding in the Temple - Mary Seeks for Jesus

Mary and Joseph, haying journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate the paschal solemnity, were returning to Nazareth when the great feast was ended. Separated from one another, according to the custom of these pious pilgrimages, they did not perceive till the end of a day's journey that Jesus was not with them. They sought Him among their relations and acquaintances; they go from the men, who travelled separately from the women, to these latter, and from the women again to the men; they inquire, they anxiously repeat the inquiry, they conjure their neighbors to tell them if they have seen their precious and holy Child. Bub no one has seen Him.

What anguish! What bitter grief for the heart of that Mother who, during twelve years, has lived a life of ecstasy, absorbed in the contemplation of His perfections! Day by day She saw in Him new graces of soul and body. Her whole life is in Him. Having inquired for Him among all the groups of travellers She met, She returned to Jerusalem to pour forth Her grief in the Temple of God.

O marvel! A Child of twelve years has placed Himself among the doctors of the law, astonishing them by the depth of His questions and the wisdom of His answers. It is He! What happiness! All the anguish of Her sorrowful search vanishes in an instant in the joy of possession.

To seek Jesus Christ is the first duty of the soul that has lost Him; to find Him again is the greatest happiness of all. It behooves us to perform the duty quickly, so as to enjoy as

quickly the unspeakable reward; delays always make the search more difficult, and often make it fruitless. "Seek the Lord while He may be found," says the prophet Isaias, 55:6. But oh, how many live in criminal indifference when Jesus has withdrawn Himself far away from them, driven off by sin! To the sweet and loving Master whose authority weighs upon their will so lightly have succeeded implacable tyrants whom they cannot satisfy. Their true Friend, whose holy and salutary presence filled their souls with peace and confidence, has given place to infuriated enemies who are the poison of today and the despair of tomorrow. But, alas! they know not the loss they have sustained; it may be they wish to forget it. Perchance they are afraid of the return of their Saviour. Let us entreat them to think of their state, let us bewail their misfortune, let us pray for them, let us beg our holy Mother to obtain for them the grace to feel how bitter and how hard a thing it is to live estranged from a God so amiable and so good. Let us ask Her to conduct them into the temple in which Jesus dwells, in which He speaks by august signs, sometimes by the mouths of His priests and oftener by the grace which flows from His tabernacle. May She engage Her divine Son to make the first advances towards the conversion of these poor souls; and, finally, may She prepare them with paternal solicitude for the inexpressible joy of finding Her Son by a true conversion. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Mother of sinners, draw all those souls to an earnest search for Jesus who have lost Him, and bring Him back to those in whom He no longer dwells.

As to ourselves, let us reflect upon our actual state; let us ask ourselves in all earnestness, Where is Jesus? If His sweet voice responds to our call, if He makes us enjoy the consolations of His presence and feel the pious emotions of His grace, let us bless Him and rejoice in Him. If, on the other hand, to prove our love for Him or to punish our numerous infidelities, He veils His face and hides Himself from us,

leaving us afflicted with the want of all sensible consolations, let us not be cast down, but rather seek Him more earnestly than ever. Let us seek Him by desires and prayers, by tears of repentance, the correction of our faults, and the multiplication of our good works. We should seek Him especially in the Sacraments in which His grace abides, in His tabernacle, which is especially His dwelling-place, and in the loving care of His holy Mother, who awaits the propitious moment to bring Him back to us.

The Dolorous Mysteries

VI. The Agony in the Garden - Presentiments of Mary

When Mary presented Her Child in the temple She heard a sad and mournful prophecy. It was the word of the holy old man Simeon: "A sword shall pierce thy heart." (Luke 2) The prophecy is already fulfilled. Mary suffered bitter anguish when She carried Her Child to a foreign land to escape the persecution of Herod; again when sorrowing She sought Him after She had lost Him; again when during His public life She saw Him living on the bread of charity and having no place to lay His head. She suffered keenly when the prophecies of the Saviour announcing His Passion and cruel death recalled to Her mind the oracles She had read in the Temple. But now the day of Her greatest sorrow is come.

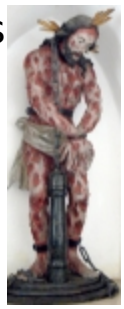
Jesus rises from the supper-table. She well knows whither He is going, and, although She is not near the scene of His agony, She receives into Her heart its mysterious rebounds. Whilst the chosen disciples sleep and forget their Master, Mary watches and prays. Her maternal presentiment represents to Her in all its horror the agony in the garden. Like Jesus She is seized with a mortal languor, a strange sadness and fear. With Him She cries out, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," at the same time prostrating Herself upon the earth. Like Him She cries out to the Father in Heaven, "O my Father! let this chalice pass from me." Am I not mistaken? Do I not rather hear Her say, "Give this chalice to me with all its dolors, but spare my beloved Child"? She is His Mother, more tender and more loving than any other mother. "O Father of my Well-beloved!" She would say, "why strike an innocent victim? Even better than I you know this sweet Lamb. In heaven He is the splendor of your

substance, the image of your glory; and I, from the moment in which I first felt the signs of maternity until this sad hour, have always seen Him full of grace and of wisdom and of goodness. He was submissive to your sacred laws - His food was" to do your will. He went about doing good. Take pity, oh, take pity on Him now! Strike sinners, whose likeness He has assumed; strike me, His unworthy Mother, but lift your chastising hand from Him. Do not subject me to bitter grief for having pronounced His death-warrant when to the glorious promises made I said: 'Be it done unto me according to Thy word.' O Father! take this chalice from His lips."

Is it that God will not allow Himself to be moved by the touching appeal of a mother? Ah! no. It is that His inexorable and infinite justice must be satisfied. Divinely enlightened by grace, Mary clearly sees what is exacted of Him; She knows that the salvation of mankind depends upon the merciful substitution of the innocent for the guilty. With Jesus She submits to the will of Her Heavenly Father; with Jesus She is in agony; with Jesus She would die if She had not been, like Him, sustained by a power from on high. O sorrowful Mother! not content with having taken part in the doleful conflict which the Child of your womb sustained in the Garden of Olives, you also wish to engage in the conflicts of your children by adoption. These combats are renewed every day - yes, every instant - there are so many enemies within us and around us, and we are assailed so often by the contradictions, infirmities, and miseries of this earthly life. And sometimes the contest rages in such a way that we, too, feel a mortal sadness, and our souls are so burdened with the weariness of battle and so cast down by fear that they are almost ready to fall from discouragement into despair. Jesus has well commanded us "to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." But are we stronger than

the apostles to resist the unhappy sleep which must assure the triumph of temptation? Alas! too often we have had experience of our weakness. We have need of feeling the presence and of hearing the voice of our Mother. Health of the weak! Refuge of sinners! Comforter of the afflicted! Help of Christians! watch and pray for us that we may come forth victorious from the combats of this life - victorious by the deep resolve never to offend God whatever else may happen, victorious by patience and resignation to the will of God in all our misfortunes.

VII. The Scourging of Our Lord - The Tears of Mary



It is a pious tradition that, during the days of our Lord's Passion, Mary felt an invincible attraction to the places in which He suffered. When She heard that He had fallen into the hands of His enemies She desired to verify with Her own eyes the events, a foreknowledge of which She had obtained from Her reading of the Sacred Scriptures and through the confidential revelations of Her beloved Son.

Thus was She in the near vicinity of the pretorium, supported by the arms of holy women, during the scourging of Jesus. She saw the sinister yet unmistakable preparations for the execution of that cruel sentence. She heard the strokes of the thongs and lashes which fell by the thousand on the sacred body of the Saviour. She heard the executioners, robust soldiers, encourage one another in their cruel work. She heard their cynical and barbarous jests, and the deep, sweet groans of their Victim. It was flesh of Her flesh that was thus torn; it was blood of Her blood that ran upon the ground. True, Her virginal body was not reached by these cruel strokes, but Her mother's heart was torn to pieces, so great was Her sympathy In Her Son's suffering. It was by tears Her heart-breaking anguish was expressed. Tears as well as blood wear away the life. Death results from too great a loss of blood and from too much weeping as well. Mary is bathed in tears, and they run down to the ground to be mingled in Her Son's blood.

What an object of pity, O Christian soul! You cannot turn your eyes from Jesus, all covered with blood, without turning them on Mary bathed in tears. Let your soul, penetrated with

shame and sorrow, carry you blushing and humbled to the feet of Christ in His scourging and to His Mother in tears.

It is the sin of the flesh they together expiate in this flagellation. In the beginning of the world's history we know that its impurities were washed out by a deluge; another was required to wash away the impurities of pagan nations - yea, even of Christian nations, too.

Sanctified by the grace of God, incorporated in Christ, we do not seem to know how to respect the flesh in which a purified soul should dwell as in a tabernacle; and too often, in contempt of the sacrament by which we receive a new life, we carry our contingent of infection to the collected mass of shameful sins that dishonor the world.

Thus it is that another deluge is required to wash away these crimes. We see it in the mystery of our Lord's scourging. It is the deluge of blood shed by our Saviour; it is the deluge of tears that flow from the eyes of Mary. These saving floods have called forth others. The saints understood them well, and, not content with purifying themselves in the blood of Jesus or in the tears of Mary, they made executioners of themselves in regard to their own flesh, chastising it without pity, imprisoning it in their instruments of torture, and opening wounds through which flowed their generous blood. They have been prodigal in blood and tears, and have exhausted their lives therein to prevent or to expiate the disorders of the flesh.

Read their history and you will tremble at the recital of the punishments they inflicted on themselves. Worldlings of easy life and fond of pleasure affect to be scandalized; they cry out: Barbarism, extravagance, folly! Let us rather admire their heroism; let us beg of Jesus and Mary the grace to chastise the sins of the flesh by its voluntary martyrdom.

But no; we are afraid. "We are told that our flesh is something sacred. The pleasures which the world offers may indeed be cast off, but we fortify ourselves with wise precautions; care is taken that nothing hurts our health. Weakness and inabilities of various kinds are brought forward to excuse us from the penances imposed by the Church. The hard stones would injure our knees if we knelt on them. In a word, the evil forces of the body seem to be carefully preserved, as if it was determined to drag down the soul into unhappy faults.

Again, how well it would be if you knew how to weep! if you knew how to save your tears for the mysterious baptism of penance! You weep over the affections which Providence has broken - just in time, perhaps, to prevent them from becoming disastrous; you weep on account of your conflicting caprices, over broken fortune, over fallen ambition, over lying reports and imaginary evils.

There are tears of tenderness ill-regulated, tears of vexation, tears of wrath, tears of discouragement and of despair, tears of ridiculous sensibility; but tears of shame and repentance for sin, tears that strengthen and purify the soul - I seldom see them in your eyes.

Christians, I conjure you, shake off this cowardice, correct this folly. If, in the presence of Christ torn with scourges, you have not strength to punish on the flesh the sins of the flesh; say at least with the prophet in presence of the sorrowing Mother: "Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that 1 may mourn night and day for those whom the flesh has destroyed in the house of my God?"

VIII. The Crowning with Thorns - Mary's Protestations

O sweetest Mother! is your heart not yet broken by the doleful emotions resulting from the scourging of your Son? Retire from the awful scene of His dolors. Suffice it to follow in spirit the horrible drama which can only end by His infamous death on the cross. Your heart will have suffered more than the heart of any other mother if it confines itself to meditate in solitude on the oracles now almost accomplished, and which, alas! you know too well. O Mother of tender compassion, come away!

But She will not; She will see Him again when the soldiers, after having loaded Him with insults, clothe Him as a mock-king and crown Him with thorns, thus presenting Him to the people. At a distance Mary witnesses the horrible scene expressed in the immortal words, Ecce Homo - "Behold the Man." It is the word of Pilate. It is taken up with cruel derision by the crowd. Not a word of pity is heard. On the contrary, shouts full of contempt and anger fill the air. O His grief-stricken Mother! How She must suffer! Every thorn that pierces the head of Her Son pierces Her heart; every blasphemous word She hears grossly insults Her love, The thorns She accepts with resignation, but She repels the blasphemies by acts of profound and sublime adoration.

O my Jesus! She would say, true King of Wisdom! true Solomon indeed, you have called me and I am come, like the daughter of Sion, to behold the diadem with which your cruel step-mother, the Jewish Synagogue, has encircled your brow. She endeavors to turn into mockery your eternal royalty; but in spite of her jealous fury, in spite of your deep

humiliations, you will always be King of angels and of men; King of all true Israelites; King of the entire world; King of my heart. More than ever do I believe in the words of the angel who, in the name of the Eternal Father, promised you the throne of David your father and a kingdom that shall have no end. Ave Rex! - Hail, O King!

These are the protestations of His holy Mother. Let us unite in- them with our whole heart. If grinding care and bitter anguish and deep disgrace should be our lot, let us accept them joyfully as the thorns of our lives, sent us by the hand of God. But above all things let us protest with all the force of our Christian love against the blasphemies which insult our divine Master Jesus Christ. In this our day there seems to be no obstacle to the blasphemies of impious men; no fear of God, no human law, no revolt of public opinion. We see them shamelessly spread abroad in our daily papers, which a morbid curiosity literally devours. It is one of the greatest sins of the day. Yet our rulers and our law-makers of whom repression is demanded tell us they see in it no crime. No crime! O my Saviour, to treat Thee as Thou wert treated by Thy executioners at the time of Thy Passion! No crime publicly to insult the supreme majesty of God, when the reputation of the most obscure, or even of the meanest, of men is protected by human law! What a sad reversal of all order! What an infamy! Let us never, through indifference or insensibility, be accomplices of the scandalous indulgence of which modern rulers and legislators are guilty when they refuse to avenge the outraged honor of God. And in order to atone, as far as we can, for the public blasphemies that daily offend the divine Majesty, let us, with our holy Mother, protest against them by heartfelt and profound acts of adoration. Let us say to Jesus, our holy Saviour: "Listen, O Lord! to the strong cry of our faith and of our love rising high above the contempt and injuries of a senseless multitude! Hail, O King! Ave Rex! Hail! In our eyes humiliation takes

nothing from Thy glory. To us Thou wilt always be the Word of God, the splendor of His glory, the' mirror of His eternal perfections, the gift of His infinite love, our own heavenly King. We will ever be Thy humble and faithful subjects, so much the more respectful and submissive as Thou hast been more grievously offended."

Let us not content ourselves even with this general protestation, but every time we hear or read of a blasphemy offered to God let us answer bywords of adoration and praise: "May the name of the Lord be blessed from henceforth, now and for ever." (Psalm 112.) "To the King of ages, immortal and invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)

May Jesus, our King, put into our hearts and on our lips as many words of praise and benediction as there are words of malediction on the lips of the impious.

IX. The Carriage of the Cross - Mary on the Way to Calvary

Whilst Jesus is conducted to the place of crucifixion He falls on His face several times under the cross He is forced to carry. A few compassionate voices are heard saying: "Alas, He dies!" Ah! no. He saves the little strength that remains until it shall have been entirely spent on that bitter cross. When He rises from His fall He is all covered with mire and blood. On the right and on the left the crowd enjoy the spectacle; and barbarous and cynical reflections are cast upon Him. All at once there is silence. A pale and tottering woman, supported by pious and friendly females, is pointed out. She braves the fury of the executioners and soldiers, and, with faltering steps, approaches the Condemned. In a low voice some murmur: "It is His Mother! Ah, poor woman!" And others say: "Blessed are those who have never been mothers, if their children should come to this!" Pitied, insulted, rebuffed, Mary is with Her Son. Oh, what a heartrending scene! Bathed in tears, the Virgin Mother casts herself kneeling at the feet of the holy Victim, and, embracing Him, cries out: "O my Son, my dear Son!" And Jesus, in a trembling voice, answers: "O Mother, my dear Mother!" The sad meeting lasts but an instant, for Mary, crushed with grief, falls fainting into the arms of the holy women.

O Mother of sorrows! why have you come? Must you not have foreseen that this meeting would grievously aggravate the pain of your dearly Beloved? Without doubt our divine Master is afflicted at seeing the grief of His Mother; but He is also profoundly consoled at the public testimony she gives of Her love.

She braves contempt and anger to come to Him; and when nearly the whole world condemns and curses Him She strives to cover Him in Her devoted heart, uttering the words: "I adore Thee and I love Thee." Cruel executioners! now you may insult and strike Him. Jesus has found, in meeting His Mother, compensation for all your injuries, for all your barbarities.

Jesus looks for the same consolation from you, O Christian soul! in the dolorous way which impious men still mark out for Him. Just now you resolve to protest against the injuries heaped upon your Saviour by the secret homage of faith and love. This is something; but it is not enough. Do better. Show yourself openly on His side; trample under-foot all human fears and make manifest your religious sentiments before the world in all circumstances. It is cheap and easy love that feasts itself on greatness that has no enemies. But it is noble and glorious to take part publicly with the persecuted. The friends of the unfortunate are the only true friends.

Are you, then, of that easy-going class who believe and adore Jesus, indeed, in the depth of their hearts, yet who for His sake will not confront His enemies? These people are mute before blasphemers, as if God were no more than a stranger to them, as if their faith was a weakness to be concealed from all eyes. Worse still: whilst their wounded conscience writhes and groans at the outrage, they admire arid almost venerate the talent and ability with which He who gave them is abased, and with impotent smiles everywhere compensate those who mock, with spirit, holy things. But there is something still worse: these half-Christians often lie to their convictions by sacrilegious admissions, and end by making common cause, at least outwardly, with the enemies of God. Certainly prudence requires that we enter not into discussions in which our inexperience or want of ability might injure the cause we

wish to defend. Certainly there may be inopportune and inappropriate methods of defense which offend self-love, excite the anger of the impious, and render them more obstinate in contradiction and in blasphemy. But an energetic denial, a grave, measured, and sympathetic word, cannot fail to be effectual; and, if we do not venture these, surely a sad countenance and eyes filled with tears are always to the purpose, and always argue better than long discourses.

But once again I say, Christians, let us openly manifest ourselves. Let us console by our external homage and our religious sentiments the offended heart of our Saviour. If the Church invites us to some manifestation of faith and love, let us obey her with alacrity. The enemies of God will be less bold if they see us on the side of His friends. Their desire is to abolish God's festivals and disperse His friends so as to weaken them. It was so in the days of the royal prophet, who makes God's enemies thus speak in the seventy- third Psalm: "Let us abolish all the festival-days of God from the land." Timid and vacillating souls who are frightened and disconcerted by blasphemy will take courage when they see that Jesus is still really loved and adored. God, prepared to avenge His outraged glory, will hold back the thunderbolts of His anger, "for one soul fearing and adoring Him is better than a thousand impious" (Ecclus. 16:3). And then our Lord's dolorous way to Calvary will in truth become a triumphal march.

X. The Crucifixion - Mary at the Foot of the Cross

"Oh, all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow; for He hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of His fierce anger." (Lamentations 1:12) It is Mary as well as Jesus that addresses us in these sad words of the prophet. Jerusalem, the joyous rendezvous of the sacred festivities; Jerusalem, which the prophet makes to utter these words in his Lamentations, was less desolated by the brutal hand of the infidel than was the soul of Mary by the unrelenting severity of God's justice.

We are on Golgotha. Jesus, hanging between heaven and earth, begets in His dolors a new race, an elect people, a holy family. For the family to be complete it must have a mother. Behold Her! A woman in tears takes Her place at the foot of the cross.

Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat films.

"See the Mother stands deploring,
By the Cross Her tears outpouring,
Where Her Son expiring hangs."

She is there to express the more strongly the power of the will which united Her in the sacrifice of Her Saviour; She is there to receive more keenly in Her sad and desolate soul the rebound of the sufferings of Her Well-Beloved, the

inexorable stroke of that sword with which She was threatened on the day of the Presentation in the Temple:

Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.

"For Her gentle spirit's groaning,
Anguish-smitten and bemoaning,
Rend the sword's most cruel pang."

Held by two loves - the love of Her Son and the love of Christian humanity - She decides in our favor. Her love for Her Child, the fruit of Her womb, urges Her to ask for Him. the favor of Heaven. Remember it is Her only Son of whom there is question. She has only Him; Her only Son, He owes His life to Her alone! But however tender, profound, and unutterable the love of the Virgin Mother may be, Her love for us forces from Her holy soul a fiat by which She conceives us and makes us spiritually born of Her. To the blood which flows from the wounds of the Saviour, to the death which presses on to the final scene of the awful drama of the Crucifixion, to the torments which She Herself endures, She still answers: "Fiat! fiat!" Let it be done! let it be done! But Jesus does not wait for the final issue of His sufferings. He presents to Mary the entire human race in the person of Saint John, saying to Her: " Woman, behold thy Son and to the human race He presents Mary, saying: "Behold thy Mother." (John 19)

O Virgin most amiable! Virgin most pure! to give a new life to a sinful world you were obliged to participate in the pains of a tragic child-bearing indeed. Without pain you brought forth your Child Jesus; but, like another Eve, you could not bring forth children of regeneration without feeling the effects of the malediction pronounced against the first Eve:

"Thou shalt bring forth children in pain." (Genesis 3) How would you have been able to exercise your rights of Mother over the human race, if you had not acquired them in the same manner as Jesus Christ acquired the rights of a Father?

Let us meditate on this sweet and consoling thought - Mary is our Mother. She is our Mother, and we are the children of Her dolorous compassion. Is not this sufficient to tell us how much we ought to love Her? Sorrow is the mysterious cause of the love, so tender and so profound, that unites the heart of the son to the heart of the mother; and when he finds out the history of all the tears, of all the anguish, of all the pains that his birth into the world cost her, his love is enhanced all the more. Mary is our Mother. For us, Her children according to the law of grace, She sacrificed Her Child according to nature. Is not this enough to explain to us how much confidence we ought to have in Her? The great mercy with which Her heart was filled on Calvary pursues us still; it encompasses us on all sides and covers us with maternal protection. In our anguish She consoles us, in our sufferings She assists us, in temptation She comes to our rescue, in the death of sin She watches over us night and day. Like Kespha, who stood by the gibbet of her sons to keep the birds of prey from devouring their dead bodies, Mary watches by the soul dead in sin to prevent the infernal beasts and birds of prey from devouring what remains of its miserable life. She lovingly awaits and strongly excites the motives of grace by which we are pressed forward to seek a refuge in Her arms.

Mary is our Mother. She opens Her wounded heart to us. This is the same as to say that every indulgence and every indifference offends Her; that to be worthy of Her we ought, at least, to accept with resignation the trials God sends us, even if we have not the courage voluntarily to seek suffering.

Mother of holy love, make me feel the full force of your sorrow, that I may weep with you; unite my tears with yours, my compassion with yours, that I may be able to please you.

Eia mater, fons am oris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donee ego vixero.

"Grant, O Mother, love's outspringing,
Me to feel Thy sorrow's wringing,
Bid me share Thy cup of woe.

With Thee weeping in communion,
With the Crucified in union,
Long as life within me stays."

The Glorious Mysteries

XI. The Resurrection of Jesus - The Joys of Mary

We read in the Gospel that Jesus, after His Resurrection, appeared many times to His disciples: To Simon Peter, to the disciples of Emmaus, to Magdalen in the garden of the sepulchre, to the apostles assembled in the upper room and on the shores of the lake of Tiberias. Can we suppose, even for an instant, that He deprived His Most Holy Mother of these apparitions? The supposition would be injurious to the most amiable Heart of Jesus, to the most loved and most loving of sons.

The humility of the Holy Virgin concealed the touching and glorious mysteries of love which rejoiced Her heart after the sad and sorrowful days of the Passion; but our faith can easily penetrate the veil by which the Mother and the Son hid from all human eyes their sacred and intimate communications.

Mary had taken the greatest part in the sufferings of the Saviour; She ought also to have the greatest part in the joys of His Resurrection. She was first at the martyrdom; She ought to be first in the triumph. This is in order. Besides the divine promises, which constantly brought suffering and consolation nearer to each other, nature itself tells us what our Blessed Saviour would do for His Most Holy Mother.

The first desire of a dutiful and well-born son is to make his mother participate in the joy of a great victory. I cannot imagine that the Conqueror of hell and death would trample under-foot this law of nature. Even in the absence of the testimony of the Gospel I cling to the belief of those holy souls who, in meditating upon the mystery of the

Resurrection, have always seen the Blessed Virgin enjoy before all others the presence of her risen Son.

At the moment in which the stone was rolled away from His tomb Jesus was with His Mother. With sweet and familiar voice He addresses Her: O my Mother! And Mary, crushed with grief, rising as if it were from the slumber of death, cries out: O my Son! What tender outpourings! What blessed caresses! What heavenly conversations! To the tortures of separation succeed the delights of reunion.

Let us assist at the interviews of Jesus and Mary. Let us felicitate our Mother upon Her great happiness, and address Her in the Canticle of the Church: "Queen of Heaven, rejoice, for He whom Thou didst bear in Thy womb is risen, as He said. Pray to Him for us. Eternal glory be to God! "Rejoice, O Mother! rejoice in the fullness of Thy heart in presence of Thy Well-Beloved! Thou wert mindful of us in the death of Thy Son; Thou wilt not forget us in His Resurrection. Pray to Him for us:

For us, who are children of a Church that would long since have been crushed under the persecution which the powers of darkness had let loose upon her, if the divine Founder had not promised her immortality:

For us, sorrowful children of a country (France) humiliated, torn with divisions, held by divine justice on the brink of an abyss which may any day become her everlasting tomb:

For us, cold Christians, whose dying life drags itself with difficulty along the rough pathway of the commandments:

For us and for those who, by blood and love, are ours; for sinners whom we love and who are too long buried in the deadly sleep of iniquity.

Offer to God our prayers for our relatives and friends whose bodies are covered by the earth around us, and whose suffering souls await but the call of Heaven to fly to His bosom who is the resurrection and the life.

O Queen! O Virgin! O Mother! pray for us, and pour down upon our prayers and upon our souls, upon the souls of those dear to us, upon our country, upon the Church, and upon the whole world the breathings of the Resurrection . To every creature who is chained down by grief, by sin, by death, give power today to sing a joyous *Alleluia*.

XII. The Ascension of Our Lord Into Heaven - The Spiritual Ascension of Mary

It is the fortieth day after the Resurrection Those whom Jesus most loved, having been attracted by the departure of His sacred humanity to heaven, were assembled on Mount Olivet. Mary is there; She is first among them all and most affected by the farewell words of Her divine Son. For a long time she fixes Her gaze, like the apostles, upon the bright cloud which hid from Her sight Her only love. Her eyes, indeed, see Him no more, but Her enraptured soul follows Him beyond the hierarchies of angels to the very throne of the Most High, where He, the Conqueror of death and King of glory, in company with the souls He had freed from their prison, takes possession of His eternal empire.

Awaking from Her ecstasy, our holy Mother feels Herself truly alone in a land of exile; but She does nob give Herself to barren grief or to those weaknesses of nature which so cruelly try our poor hearts when God calls to Himself those whom we love, and the void caused by whose absence we so keenly feel. Their presence was so dear to us that we can hardly be consoled even when they departed in the midst of benedictions, and when we have heard them express joy at being delivered from the evils of this life. "They rejoice in the things that are said to them, and they will enter into the house of the Lord."

But we are imperfect; Mary is perfection itself. The departure of Her Son enlivens Her hopes and implants in Her heart the magnanimous resolution of advancing always until the hour

in which God will make Her a participant in the happiness of heaven.

Ever tending thither, the soul of our holy Mother becomes more perfect day by day. And it is for the glory of God and for our encouragement She thus labors for Her perfection. It seems to me I hear Her maternal voice constantly inviting me to "rise higher and still higher." Thus does She speak to me:

You are purified from sin, from every stain of the soul; you have risen from the debasement of human dignity, from the deprivation of the Divine Life; you detest sin more than any other evil that can befall you; you would rather die than commit it again. It is well; but "rise still higher." *Excelsior!*

You have a horror for light faults which grieve the Spirit of God and which human frailty has so much trouble to avoid. If the impetuosity of nature should outrun the commands of your will, your heart resents it and is troubled, for it would rather live to God free from even the slightest stain. True, "the just man sins seven times a day," but if you could you would not sin at all. This is very well; but do better. "Rise higher still." *Excelsior!*

You bear bravely the combats of virtue. There is not one of your passions that has not received a mortal blow; alone in the world, detached from its goods and enjoyments, you have barred and bolted all the doors of your soul against its maxims and seductions. That is excellent; but "rise still higher." *Excelsior!*

Not only do you bear with resignation and patience the heavy cross God has sent you, but you march gladly forward on the road of Calvary, anxious for humiliations and sufferings, the better to imitate your Saviour. Contemptible

in your own eyes and glad to be contemned by others, you wish to be able to say with the apostle: "We are made the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all even till now." (1 Corinthians 4:13) All this is well indeed; but "rise higher still." *Excelsior!*

Your soul is enlightened; all virtues shine in it as in a mirror. You have no happiness only in God; you seek His presence continually; you desire His presence always; you constantly seek His loving embraces. This is rising very high; but "rise still higher." *Excelsior!*

You possess God by divine charity. You are united with Him as with the most loving spouse. This is the end of perfection on earth, but it is not yet the supreme perfection. *Excelsior!*

Higher still! Behold the steps in this mystic ladder: purity without a shadow, the reward of trial, the crowning of victories won, the consummation of virtues, the presence of God without a veil, the revelation of the divine essence, peace, joy, everlasting gladness in the eternal union, heaven whither Jesus has ascended - heaven to which He calls us and in which He opens His arms to receive us.

XIII. The Descent of the Holy Ghost - Mary the Source of Grace

Before ascending into heaven Jesus said to His disciples: "You shall not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which you have heard by My mouth." Faithful to this command, "they retired to an upper room, where they were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and His brethren." Behold what we read in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. From the most venerable traditions we learn that, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, He first rested on the head of our Holy Virgin Mother as a shaft of light, which immediately spread itself on the heads of the whole assembly in the form of tongues of fire.

Precious indications and blessed image of Mary's mediation!

Her intercessory power is thus solemnly recognized by Her children in the very cradle of the Church. They are still deeply affected by the remembrance of their want of courage during the sad days of the Passion; they feel their unworthiness and the need they have of uniting their prayers with those of the ever-faithful Virgin. Was She not associated on Calvary in the painful birth into the world of a holy nation and a purchased people? Is She not the Mother of the regenerated family which is to renew the face of the earth? No one so well as She can bend to Her the ear of God. The maternal rights which She possessed over Him whom She bore in Her womb, and who obeyed Her during His life on earth, are not surrendered; She can revive them any time. The more perfect is the Son, the more powerful is the

Mother. Mary does not command; She entreats. Every prayer united with Hers, passing through Her maternal heart and virginal lips, is tinged with Her love and Her purity, and entering effectually, nay, victoriously, into the heart of the great Mediator, becomes in a measure divine and irresistible.

All graces may be obtained by Mary; all graces come to us through Her. The holy Fathers represent Her to us as the mysterious channel through which the benefits of the Divinity are spread upon the earth. In the mystical body of the Church She is that movable aqueduct, full of fertilizing channels, which unites the head to the trunk. She is the deep bosom in which all goods are stored and from which they are distributed. She is the medium through which God's gifts must pass. In Herself full of all graces, Saint Bernard says She is superabundant for us.

Let us admire this marvel of divine mercy, and have recourse earnestly and confidently to this superabundance.

We are much more ungrateful and disloyal than the apostles were during our Lord's Passion, and are, in consequence, much more unworthy to address ourselves to the Blessed Majesty of God. Let us, like them, "pray with Mary, the Mother of Jesus." Let us, like infants, commit our feeble hearts to the keeping of Her heart and ask every grace through Her all-powerful intercession.

We should, however, be reasonable and discreet in our demands. The altars of Our Mother are often besieged by an eager throng of supplicants, who force upon Her tender beneficence the temporal interests in which, alone they are preoccupied. Our health, our affairs, our affections, our troubles, and our sufferings certainly deserve the attention of the Virgin most clement. But these affect the great affair of our salvation and of our perfection only in a distant way.

Purity of soul, the conflicts of virtue, our advancement in the knowledge and love of God, are far more worthy to fix the attention of the Mother of divine grace.

Let us, then, beg of Her, above and before all else, the graces of newness of life as well as of progress in good and union with God, which the divine Paraclete will, at Her request, pour forth upon our souls. True it is that She cannot send the Holy Spirit upon us of Her own authority, for He obeys but the Father and the Son. But if She calls Him for us, if Her sweet and strong voice should make the heavens resound with the invocation, Veni Sancte Spiritus, the miracle of Pentecost will renew itself in our lives. Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and the fear of the Lord - all the gifts of the Holy Spirit - will become our portion if we pray with Mary and through Her.

XIV. The Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin - The Desires of Mary

In the Fourth Book of Kings we read that the prophet Elias, without passing through the gates of death, was raised to heaven in a fiery chariot. Why, it will be asked, did not God show the same magnificence to His Mother? Why did He not send down His angels to anticipate and prevent the death which the Mother of His Son was to endure? The prompt resurrection of the Most Holy Virgin and Her glorious assumption into heaven are assuredly great privileges. But would not the total exemption from death have been more glorious and more just at the same time? It was by sin death entered into the world; but Mary was exempt from the least stain of sin. Having been conceived in the grace of God, it would seem that She had a rightful claim upon immortality. Sin and death are connected with one another in the designs of God; so likewise are original grace and immortality.

Let us not trouble ourselves. What God does is well done. In truth, death had no more rightful claim over Mary than over Her divine Son. Neither the tempest of His agony, nor the fury of His executioners, nor the tortures of the Crucifixion, nor the effusion of His blood through a thousand wounds could have caused the death of Christ the Son of God. Neither the anguish of Her compassion, nor the breaking of Her heart as She stood by his cross, nor the infirmities of age and of nature could have caused the death of the Immaculate Mother of our Saviour. The prophet Isaias tells us that Christ was offered up as a victim "because He willed it." Mary, after the example of Her Son, is offered and dies because She willed it. It is Her love of God that places Mary

on the bed of death around which the apostles stand weeping.

From the day of the Ascension Mary was agitated by the desire of being reunited with Her Son. Her long exile was nothing but the languishing of love. This intense love was sufficient to wear away Her life and to break the ties which bound Her to this earth. This world, when stripped by death of those to whom we have given our hearts, appears no more anything but a dreary desert in which a thousand phantoms play with us and fatigue us with their presence as well as with their absence. There is only enough of the reality, it seems, to fix our lives in it while it lasts. There is only a sickly exaggeration of ill-regulated affections which we lavish upon creatures. This was not the nature of Mary's languishing. All Her love was centred in Her Son; but it was not for Herself alone She desired to leave the world in which She still loved those whom Jesus loved and had confided to Her care. In heaven God is better known, better loved, better glorified. Behold the reason why Mary languishes to be there; behold why Her holy soul, by a last effort, detaches itself from Her unstained body in order to bring it to perfection by its absence. Not one of the common accidents which affect us could ever have broken the most holy union of the spirit and the flesh in this Virgin most Admirable. She gives Herself to Death, but Death would not dare to lay his cold hand upon Her.

Poor sinners that we are, we dare not hope that Death will have such respect for us. Cruel labor without rest weakens our nature and steals away from it every instant some particle of life. Whether with a good grace or a bad grace, we must certainly submit. Yet God wishes that even this hard necessity should turn to our advantage, and that the desire of death should become one of our greatest merits.

But what kind of a desire is this? I see and I hear Christians who wish to die. Some of them say to Death: "Snatch me from this vale of tears, and bring me to a land of joy which I so much desire; deliver me from the miseries of this life, for I am disgusted with them; make an end of my conflicts, for the weight of these weapons is too much for my indolent hands; take this cross from me, for it weighs heavily upon me, and my tired shoulders can bear it no longer." This desire is mean and criminal. Others, clearly seeing that the world is only a place of passage, and that there is no true happiness to be enjoyed except in seeing and possessing God as He is, and that this possession is indeed the crowning of the aspirations of our nature, cry out: "O angels of heaven! open wide your gates, open the eternal gates, and let us in! " But this they say without remembering their unworthiness, without stopping to inquire whether they are innocent in action and pure of heart, whether they are strong and valiant in fight, or whether they have acquired the virtues which make of man a king of glory. Their desire is interested, rash, presumptuous.

Listen, Christian! The desire of those who are in haste to disarm the enemy, to purify themselves, to acquire merit, to consummate the work of their perfection in order to hear all the sooner the call of their Well-Beloved, so that they may never more offend Him, and that they may love Him more intimately and be able to sing His glory more worthily by an unfailing and unending song of praise - behold what a good desire is! Cherish it in your heart, and unite it with the most pure aspirations of the Blessed Mary.

XV. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin - Mary is Queen

To crown a work is to give the last touch to its perfection. In this sense Mary, the masterpiece of divine omnipotence and goodness, is crowned in heaven by Her Son. Jesus completes the virtues of His Most Holy Mother, tears away the veil under which the lustre of Her privileges was hidden, and reinvests Her immaculate body with light and immortality.

To crown any one is to reward his merits. In this sense Mary is crowned in heaven by the sovereign Renumerator; for to every thought of Hers, to each of Her desires, to every one of Her actions corresponds a degree of eternal glory which raises Her above any glorified creature.

Finally, to crown any one is to invest him with supreme honor and power. In this sense Mary is crowned in heaven by the eternal King of ages. Jesus places Her on His right hand, invites the whole heavenly court around Her throne, and proclaims Her Queen of angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all saints.

"Queen of angels": She is their Queen, not by the rights of nature, but by the rights of grace. She has had the distinguished privilege of possessing the greatest created purity in a body borrowed from the blood of sinners, and of giving birth to the King of angels and archangels.

"Queen of patriarchs": She is Queen of the patriarchs, because through Her they have obtained the object of their desires. It was the fruit of Her chaste womb that healed their

pious languishings and delivered them from the dark prisons in which they waited for glory and happiness.

"Queen of prophets": She is prophecy itself, for She gave to the world the promised reality. The Messias, whose portrait was perfectly drawn many years before His coming by men inspired of God, was formed of Her flesh and blood.

"Queen of apostles": for by Her prayers they obtained, along with the Spirit of God, the gift of the divine word. Her sweet and mysterious influence anticipates them in the souls they convert to God.

"Queen of martyrs": was She not associated in the sufferings of Her Son? Did She not suffer in Her Mother's heart everything that the martyrs of the faith suffered in their bodies?

"Queen of confessors": Her perfect life is a perfect model of the sublime virtues they have practised and by which they have attained the glory of heaven.

"Queen of virgins": in Her purity she excels them all. And along with the honor of virginity She possessed that which was permitted to no other virgin to possess - the joys of maternity.

"Queen of all saints": to Her most powerful intercession they are all indebted for the grace of perseverance which opened to them the gates of heaven.

O admirable Queen! in what part of the heavenly kingdom shall we find ourselves one day? We know nothing of it; it is a secret in God's sacred keeping. In waiting for its divulgence behold us mourning and weeping in this vale of tears! But Thy throne is in our hearts, O Blessed Queen! Govern and direct Thy unhappy subjects. Our hope is in Thy

sweet and merciful power, which leads and guides us. The enemies of our salvation will be powerless if Thou dost only cover us with Thy royal mantle. Our tottering steps will not stray from the way that leads to heaven, if Thou dost direct them. Hear, then, the prayers which all Christian humanity from the place of its exile addresses to Thee:

"We fly to Thy patronage, O holy Mother of God! Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver from all dangers, O Thou ever glorious and blessed Virgin!"

"O Queen of Christians! deign to direct and sanctify this day our hearts and bodies according to the law of God, and enable us to fulfill all the works of His sacred precepts, so that here on earth and hereafter in heaven we may merit, by Thy intercession, eternal salvation."

About This EBook

The text of his ebook is taken from the book *Meditations on the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary*, by Father Jacques-Marie Louis Monsabre, O.P., 1885. It was translated from the French by Father Stephen Byrne, O.P., and the edition used was printed in Ireland in 1910.

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The cover image a detail of the oil painting "Madonna and Child" by Jacques Courtois, mid-17th century. It is in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The image was swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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